

At-Risk Working Group: Meeting #8

Date & Time: July 18, 2017 3:00-4:00pm

Location: Conference call line

Attendees:

- Amanda Alexander | Deputy Chief of Elementary Schools, District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS)
- John Davis | Chief of Schools, District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS)
- Erika Harrell | DC Prep PCS parent; Member, My School DC Parent Advisory Council; member, DC School Reform Now; member, PCSB Parent & Alumni Leadership Council (PALC)
- Emily Lawson | Founder & CEO, DC Prep PCS
- Darren Woodruff | EL Haynes PCS, Benjamin Banneker HS parent ; Chair, Public Charter School Board (PCSB)

Call Summary:

- [Presentation on the Every Day Counts! DC attendance campaign from Aurora Steinle, DME. See the meeting 8 slides.]
- Q: Are there specific grades that have more absenteeism than others?
 - A: Yes, we've broken out the data by grade band. If your hypothesis is that high schoolers have worse attendance than students in other grades, you are correct. A lot of high schoolers fall into the severe or profound absence category.
- Comment: I haven't seen any kind of messaging or ads behind attendance or support or resources for attendance. Advertising for attendance should be like the advertising for the Common Lottery. For the lottery, advertising is everywhere and it's clear that the city is committed. I will say that the language of the campaign messaging (slide 16) "Absences Add Up" is not compelling. Saying that missing 1 or 2 days a month leads to being absent 10% doesn't seem that bad. We need to make a clear connection between attendance and success for students. The second message does a good job mentioning students and families. The third message that includes the piece about "WeCareDC" is great because there can be a lot of judgement about absences from who don't have a good understanding of the challenges around getting students to school. Have movie nights and other incentives is also a great idea.
 - Facilitator: The Common Lottery analogy is right. We are trying to get a jump start from messages that have done well before.
- Comment: On the presentation, it lists a positive relationship with one adult as a strategy for encouraging attendance, which is an idea that also came out of our conversation in the working group on GradPathways. I want to make sure the Cross-Sector Collaboration Task Force is able to coordinate and not replicate the work of Every Day Counts!
 - Facilitator: This starts to get into our Tier II approaches, which include targeting youth in need of strong relationships. The Every Day Counts! attendance campaign is pretty committed to Tier 1 approaches. We don't have a clear strategy for expanding mentorships and make those connections and would love input on this.
- [Transition to second part of the deck on the working group templates from the previous meeting]

- Facilitator: The templates have been updated from last time. Do these templates capture our conversations accurately so far and are they ready to present to the full group at the next meeting?
 - The group did not respond with comments on any of the templates.
- Q: When we present our ideas to the full Task Force, are we going to go over the big buckets (the four problem areas) we've identified?
 - A: At Tuesday's meeting, we are just going over what we've done in the one bucket (#4 Lack of cross-sector coordination on serving off-track secondary students).
 - Comment: I think we should share the universe of things we are thinking about and then explain the particular part we've been working on during our working group meetings.
- Facilitator: The specific recommendations don't need to be on the level of what needs to happen when but we do need to use the Task Force as a spotlight to shine the light on the policy areas that need the city's attention.
- Q: Where does mental health support across the city come in to the focus areas we have listed?
 - A: Mental health support goes beyond supporting off-track secondary students. We could have recommendations around mental health supports, which could fall into focus area #3 along with creating structures for best practice sharing, or it could fall into #2 if it's about a funding issue.
 - Comment: Having mental health supports fall into focus area #1 or 2 could make sense, as could having it fall into #4. I think we need support from other city agencies to support at-risk students in all areas of their lives. Mental health support might deserve its own "bucket". We have touched on it about but we should explore it more.
- Comment: We should make sure that these services are supporting families. I don't see anything about parents partnering with agencies to support students.
 - Facilitator: We need to add it in since we feel it's missing.
 - Comment: Agencies should be involved in work anchors, as well as attendance efforts, to make sure they can have strong relationship with families.